Change in visa rules by British Government

†281. SMT. MAYA SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pelased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that recently British government had changed visa rules for entry to their nation as well as for those who travel to other countries *via* their country causing difficulties to Indians;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA) : (a) to (c) British, visa rules governing entry into the country have not been changed recently. However, rules regarding British transit visa have changed.

Nationals of specified countries, including India, will now require a visa to transit through the UK, except in the case of the following categories of travellers:

Holders of valid US/Canadian visas who also hold a ticket to or from the US/Canada routed *via* the UK, holders of US Permanent Residence Cards (Green Cards) issued on or after 21 April, 1998, holders of Canadian Permanent Residence Cards isued on or after 28 June, 1998, holders of Category D visas isued by EU/EEA member States, which are valid for more than 3 months, holders of EU residence permits and holders of diplomatic or official passports issued by the Government of India.

As can be seen from above, Indian nationals transitting through UK on their way to countries outside North America and European Union would now be required to obtain transit visas for UK.

Visa-on-Arrival

282. MISS MABEL REBELLO:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the 'Visa-on-Arrival' project to facilitate the arrival of foreign tourists in India, has been cleared;

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) whether certain countries have been kept out of the reach of this facility, if so, the details thereof; and

(c) in the current scenario of global terrorism, how far it would be safe to run this project in the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (c) In view of the prevailing security environment in the country, proposal for introducing visa on arrival scheme has been shelved.

Visit of King of Bhutan to India

283. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the King of Bhutan visited India during September last and had discussions with the Prime Minister and other Government functionaries on matters of mutual interest between the two countries; and

(b) if so, the details of discussions held and the final decisions arrived at?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) His Majesty Jigme Singye Wangchuck, King of Bhutan, paid a State visit to India from September 14 to 18, 2003. During the visit, President and Vice-President held talks with the King. PM, DPM, EAM and Minister of Finance separately called on him.

During the course of the visit, Government of India agreed to package of assistance on the Indian contribution to projects and programmes under Bhutan's 9th FiveYear Plan (2002-2007). A Memorandum of Understanding under the aegis of which India would facilitate the preparation of a Detailed Project Report on the 900 MW Punatsangchu Hydro-electric Power Project in central Bhutan was also signed.

The visit provided a useful opportunity for exchange of views at the highest level on a wide range of issues of mutual interest and concern,